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Regional Literature as a Mirror: Reflecting Back onto the Region and Out into the Wider World

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ABSTRACT

Regional literature can be of enormous national or international cultural value. In fact, many of the works that are accorded the highest cultural value and understood as part of the canon of national literature in Australia, are also arguably works of regional literature. However, regional literature usually appeals only to a very small audience—namely, the residents of the particular region in which the work is set, or with which it is concerned.

In this article, I detail the ways in which regional literature can reflect the region—and the residents of that region—back onto itself. However, I also consider the ways in which regional literature is read by individuals residing outside of the region in question. Just as when you stand in front of the bathroom mirror, a certain image of yourself is reflected back to you, and when someone stands just over your shoulder, they see an ever so slightly different reflection of you—so it is with regional literature. I analyse the similarities and the differences between these two perceptions by first looking backwards to the history of the debates about regionalism and regional literature in Australia. These debates pitted those in favor of regionalism against those in favor of nationalism, internationalism, and even universalism; they also revealed rifts between writers, who were some of the most outspoken proponents of a regional conception of

Australia, and the postmodern theories of academics. Then, I look forward to speculate on the future of regional literature in an increasingly globalised society and publishing industry.

KEY WORDS

regional literature, regionalism, Australian literature, Western Australia, Western Australian literature, minority literature, book publishing

I. Introduction

It should be self-evident, but the value-laden connotations of the term "regional" sometimes obscure this simple fact: regional literature is not simply literature that has failed to gain national or international attention. For the purposes of this article, regional literature can be understood as literature possessing cultural value that is specific to a region, though not necessarily to the exclusion of national or international cultural value. Regional literature, contrary to popular opinion, can be of enormous national or international cultural value. In fact, many of the works that are understood as part of the national canon of literature in Australia (if such a thing can be said to exist) are also arguably works of regional literature; these include the writings of Peter Cowan, A.B. Facey, Elizabeth Jolley, John Kinsella, Sally Morgan, Randolph Stow, Tim Winton, and many others. I have just named seven Western Australian writers, and this is no accident; my research into regional literature takes Western Australia as a case study.

However, regional literature often appeals only to a very small audience. This audience is, of course, the residents of the particular region in which the work is set, or with which it is concerned. "The region" can be defined as a space existing on the edges of cultural centres. The cultural centre of Australia is commonly referred to as the "Sydney–Melbourne axis" or the "golden triangle" of Sydney–Melbourne–Canberra. Regional literature is something that is created by writers located outside these cultural centres, or who, at the

very least, have an established relationship with a region and a readership located outside the cultural centres (usually as a consequence of former residency in that region).

In this article, I will address the ways in which regional literature can reflect the region—and the residents of that region—back onto itself. I will also consider the ways in which regional literature is read by individuals residing outside of the region in question. Just as when you stand in front of the bathroom mirror, a certain image of yourself is reflected back to you, and when someone stands just over your shoulder, they see an ever so slightly different reflection of you—so it is with regional literature.

I will analyse the similarities and the differences between these two perceptions by first looking backwards to the history of the debates about regionalism and regional literature in Australia. These debates pitted those in favour of regionalism against those in favour of nationalism, internationalism, and even universalism; they also revealed rifts between writers, who were some of the most outspoken proponents of a regional conception of Australia, and the postmodern theories of academics. After surveying these debates, I will look forward to speculate on the future of regional literature in an increasingly globalised society and publishing industry.

II. Looking Backwards

The conversation about regionalism in Australia, and especially with regard to Australian literature, did not begin to take shape until the late 1970s. (I use the term "regionalism in Australia" rather than "Australian regionalism," because I am interested in exploring regions *within* Australia, rather than Australia as a region in the South Pacific, the Southern Hemisphere, or even the world.) However, the development of this conversation about literary regionalism in Australia was foreshadowed by a tradition of political regionalism with a much longer history.

In fact, the appearance of state-based political regionalism in Australia is virtually commensurate with European settlement on the

island-continent. Historians have often noted this fact by attributing unique characteristics to each state and its residents. Australia's most notorious historian, Manning Clark, for example, writes of the colonial reaction to the Australian Colonies Government Act, which was passed by the British parliament in 1850:

> The legislative council of New South Wales . . . [was] not interested in a federal assembly that could not be dominated by New South Wales; and South Australia, as a hint of future provincial loyalties, rejected the proposal as in a British sense unconstitutional. (119)

Though the New South Wales and South Australian governments were united in their dislike of the Australian Colonies Government Act and desire for self-government, the logical processes the two governments used to reach this conclusion are entirely different. New South Wales is depicted as arrogant and self-centred, while South Australia is said to have "provincial loyalties". The same characteristics are thought to define these two states today.

Of this phenomenon, Clark is content noting that "intercolonial customs and different railway gauges [are] part of the price paid for indulging in [the] folly" of state-based political regionalism (119). He is, of course, referring to one of the most often cited examples of state-based political regionalism in Australia: different railway gauges were adopted in different Australian states—Australia is comprised of six states and two territories—which meant travellers had to change trains where these different rail lines met. However, perhaps a more striking example of Australia's long-standing tradition of political regionalism is the threat of secession from the rest of Australia that has been part of Western Australia's political landscape since shortly after white Australia was founded, not as Australia, but as a bunch of separate British colonies.

Australia's literary regionalism was clearly foreshadowed by this tradition of political regionalism. It was further inspired by the state-based literature anthologies that were published throughout the

twentieth century. However, the conversation beginning in the late 1970s showcased an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the historical and contemporary influences at work in any conception or reception of regional literature, which the earlier anthologies lacked, especially as they did not engage in any form of inter-textual debate.

It was not until October 1978 that the elements necessary to spark a substantial critical debate on the subject of regionalism in Australian literature, finally began to coalesce. This landmark event occurred at a seminar organised to explore the theme of "Time, Place and People: Regionalism in Contemporary Australian Literature". Interested locals and writers from around Australia were in attendance at the three-day gathering in the port city of Fremantle, Western Australia. The speeches delivered at this seminar by such luminaries as Cowan, T.A.G. Hungerford, Jolley, Frank Moorhouse and Thomas Shapcott, were later reprinted in an edition of the literary journal *Westerly*, thereby giving them greater circulation and cultural currency. The published versions of these speeches are as close to foundational works as can be found on the subject of regional literature in Australia; they provided the basis for much future discussion, as well as formally introducing the terms and ideas against which many future critics reacted.

But even then, the conversation did not really gain momentum until the early 1980s, when Western Australian academic Bruce Bennett began actively promulgating regionalism as a critical framework for understanding Australian literature. Bennett was the most prolific advocate of

> a study of regions from the ground up: commencing with particular places, the biographical connections of writers with these places and their literary references to, or recreations of these places, together with a study of their intellectual and cultural milieux. ("Concepts" 81)

It was around this time that significant numbers of state-based or regional literature anthologies first began to be published. Bennett writes on this subject in his chapter on "Literary Culture since Vietnam:

A New Dynamic" in *The Oxford Literary History of Australia*:

> Regional anthologies have been more numerous in contemporary Australia than any other kind. Frequently published in the state or region which provides their focus, these anthologies have often been designed to raise awareness of the landscapes, people and ways of living of the region. Western Australia has been the leading contributor to a regional literary consciousness, but all states and territories, and a number of sub-regions have been represented, especially those from outside the "golden triangle" of Sydney–Melbourne–Canberra. (258)

Regionalism and regional literature did not become an Australian preoccupation until the late 1970s and into the 1980s—these anthologies "[having] been more numerous in *contemporary* Australia than any other kind". During these two decades, thirteen regional literature anthologies were published in Western Australia, for example, whereas only two had been published in the previous 150 years of white settlement.

The 1980s also saw the founding of regionally based literary magazines such as *Island Magazine* in Tasmania and *Northern Perspective* in the Northern Territory. Furthermore, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, a publishing house exclusively dedicated to the publication of works by Western Australian writers, was established in 1975 and went on to become a model for regional publishing operations across Australia. The Press's reputation was consolidated in the Australian book trade with the publication of two books in the 1980s: A. B. Facey's *A Fortunate Life*, which is a memoir of the classic "Aussie battler" growing up in the early part of the 20th century, and Sally Morgan's *My Place*, a milestone in Indigenous writing in Australia, in which Morgan writes of her quest to discover her hidden Aboriginal heritage. *A Fortunate Life* and *My Place*, published in 1981 and 1987 respectively, have both sold over a half-million copies.

When discussing book sales in Australia, it is important to bear in mind that Australia's population is only a little over 20 million,

whereas the United States, for example, has a population in excess of 300 million. A half-million copies sold to a population of 20 million means that, in terms of market penetration, approximately one in every 40 people owns a copy of both *A Fortunate Life* and *My Place*. To have the same level of saturation of the American market, a publisher would have to sell 7.5 million copies of a given title.

Since the 1980s, not a single literature anthology has been published that explicitly acknowledges it is composed of Western Australian writers. Instead, several anthologies of Western Australian literature have been published that are packaged to appear generically Australian or organised around certain themes, such as *Summer Days: Stories from Childhood*. Fremantle Arts Centre Press has also been subject to the changing tides of culture: it has been unable to even approach, much less replicate, the successes of its 1980s publishing programme.

The conversation about regionalism and regional literature in Australia seems to have largely died out by the 1990s – perhaps because those who had campaigned so actively for its notice felt that, in the few years it had enjoyed a spotlight of Australian literary criticism, it had managed to accomplish its goals. Only the smallest of whimpers was heard on the subject in the decade of grunge rock and grunge literature, and there has been veritable silence in this regard with the dawning of the twenty-first century. Without even the dignity of an obituary, the matter of regionalism in Australian literature has disappeared from the literary and critical landscape. But this was only fitting, as it appeared on the literary scene in a similarly unheralded fashion.

No history of regionalism in Australia has been written, nor has anyone explored in a comprehensive way the causes (or the effects) of the movement. Even the most basic summary of events given above—charting the progression of interest in the subject of regionalism in Australia and Australian literature from the late 1970s through to the present day—has been assembled from primary sources, rather than with the assistance of another critical eye. Indeed, the time and ink spent dismantling the idea of regional literature far outstrips

that spent building the case.

Nonetheless, "the region" in Australia has been positively defined in many different ways. The most sophisticated definition to appear in the 1980s posited a division between the centre and the periphery that constituted "the region"; this prompted a discussion about the inequitable distribution of the instruments of cultural production between the centre and the periphery. Yet, even this definition still presents the physical region as the most important facet of regionalism—*physical* geography determines the division between the centre and the periphery—much as it was in earlier articulations.

After the popular critical debate died down in the early 1990s, a few intrepid academics and writers persisted in their advocacy of a regional conception of Australia and emerged with a new focus. This latest formulation of regionalism stresses the importance of the reader over that of the physical region. As usual, Bennett provides the most succinct overview of this trend in the discussions of regionalism and regional literature in Australia:

> Now, at the beginning of the 1990s, I believe that readers should be brought more firmly into this equation. For not only has reader-power expressed itself in an increasingly commercialised marketplace, but it has also made its mark theoretically in projections of readers as makers of meaning and even as rewriters of texts. (*Australian* 213)

Earlier in the chronology of his critical writing, Bennett seemed interested only in the interaction between the writer and her environment. In the 1990s, however, he expanded the scope of his critical thinking to include the reader. Of course, this was a response to contemporary changes of emphasis in literary theory, which included "projections of readers as makers of meaning and even as rewriters of texts" (in other words, "reader-response criticism").

III. The Mirror Metaphor

It is only with this latest formulation of "the region" that the metaphor of the mirror begins to reveal its inherent possibilities. The mirror as a metaphor of mimesis is not a new concept in poetics, but it raises interesting new questions in this context. After all, if regional literature is understood as literature possessing cultural value that is specific to a region, with an emphasis on the role of the reader, then the question must be asked, "What is cultural value? And who determines it?" If cultural value with regard to regional literature is determined by those individuals resident in the region, then the mirror reflects a certain image; if it is determined by those individuals resident in the cultural centres, then it reflects another. If both definitions of cultural value are seen as valid, then the mirror reveals a schizophrenic representation of regional literature. Therefore, it is imperative to take the time and more closely examine the evidence, so as to reach a satisfactory resolution to this question of cultural value and regional literature.

The following excerpt from Chris Jenks's *Culture* goes a long way towards defining "culture" as the word is used in this article:

> The concept of culture implies a relationship with the accumulated shared symbols representative of and significant within a particular community, what we might describe as a context-dependant semiotic system. Culture, however, is not simply residue, it is, as we have already considered, in progress; it processes and reveals as it structures and contains. Culture is the way of life and the manner of living of a people. (121)

Jenks makes several important observations in this excerpt, including the all-important observation that culture is subject to change. He further observes that the definition of "culture," similar to the definition of "the region" discussed above, can only be determined by a collective of individuals—the "way of life and manner of living of a

people". Of course, the reason for this similarity is that "the region" is an entity defined by its culture.

Doreen Massey illustrates the importance of culture as it defines "the region" in her compilation of essays, *Space, Place and Gender*. Notably, she uses the term "place" where this article uses "region," but in this instance such semantic quibbles are irrelevant; no meaning is lost in the translation of terms. Massey writes:

> A "place" is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location. And the singularity of any individual place is formed in part out of the specificity of interactions which occur at that location (nowhere else does this precise mixture occur) and in part out of the fact that the meeting of those social relations at that location (their partly happenstance juxtaposition) will in turn produce new social effects. . . . The identities of places are inevitably unfixed. They are unfixed in part precisely because the social relations out of which they are constructed are themselves by their very nature dynamic and changing. (168-69)

Massey's observation that "the region" is "formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location" is clearly very similar to the aforementioned definition of "culture" as the "way of life and manner of living of a people." Shared culture contributes to a sense of regional identity. This "sense of regional identity" is enhanced by a variety of factors, including those as various as "physical geography, regional administration and functional land-use," all of which can be understood as contributing to "culture" (Bennett, "Concepts" 79). Also, sport plays a significant role in the establishment and reinforcement of regional identity in Australia. However, the contributions of creative artists to this formulation of regional identity should not be underestimated.

The particular definition of "culture" discussed above gained prominence alongside the popularisation of cultural studies as a field of critical inquiry. The latter occasion transpired in the following manner:

"Over no more than the past thirty years, initially in Britain and then spreading to North America and Australia, a new realm of research and publication activities has entered the academy under the guise of 'cultural studies'" (Jenks 151). Since its inception (or at least its acceptance in the academy), cultural studies has been imagined as interdisciplinary. In other words, "it acknowledges no disciplinary origin, it encourages work on the interface of disciplinary concerns and it acknowledges a shifting and sprightly muse" (Jenks 158).

Nonetheless, cultural studies has always had a strong association with the discipline of social anthropology. Where "culture" has been defined as a "way of life and manner of living of a people," it is clearly very similar to the interests of social anthropology. As Simon During charts in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, the origins of cultural studies (and the emergence of this linkage) were characterised by two features:

> It concentrated on "subjectivity," which means that it studies culture in relation to individual lives, breaking with social scientific positivism or "objectivism". . . . The second distinguishing characteristic of early cultural studies was that it was an engaged form of analysis. Early cultural studies did not flinch from the fact that societies are structured unequally, that individuals are not all born with the same access to education, money, health-care, etc., and it worked in the interests of those who have fewest resources. . . . These two defining features of early cultural studies were closely connected because it is at the level of the individual life that the cultural effects of social inequality are most apparent. (1-2)

In this excerpt, During reminds the reader how "subjectivity" is bound up in the definition of "culture." He also clarifies why cultural studies is an appropriate mode for studying the production and publication of regional literature. After all, if a region is "formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location," and these "social relations" are given to change, it could surely be said that an unevenly structured society contributes to these

relations and, thus, to a sense of regional identity. This is particularly the case if there is a sense of "unevenness" between disparate regions (as opposed to within a single region, though this could also contribute a sense of regional identity), in which case the cultural studies approach would seem to work best "in the interests of those who have the fewest resources". In other words, cultural studies works in the interests of those located outside the cultural centres, since it is they who most often lack the resources required for cultural production.

It is important to note some of the most significant developments in this latest articulation of regionalism. Foremost among them is that with the new emphasis on the reader, advocates of a regional conception of Australia have taken an issue first raised by proponents of a centre vs. periphery formulation of the region—namely, the issue of cultural production as a crucial component of regional identity—and they have re-invented it to suit their own needs. By taking this issue onboard, they acknowledge that regions in Australia are at least in part defined by their access to such things as publishing houses and literary magazines, which is to say access to the public imagination. It is the emphasis placed on this final detail—access to the public imagination, to readers' minds—that separates this latest articulation of regionalism from its predecessors. As one critic notes, "reading habits . . . [are] shaped by the publishing and promotional industries" (Hergenhan 85).

By engaging with recent literary theory, including Roland Barthes's "death of the author" and reader-response criticism, advocates of a regional conception of Australia further assert that the public imagination is of great importance in any study of literature. Therefore, a *physical* definition of regionalism, regional literature, or even regional boundaries, is seen to be insufficient. It is likely that it was this literary theory that first led regionalist critics to a formulation of regionalism that invoked the reader, but this would have been reinforced by what they perceived as happening in regional areas with regard to control of the instruments of cultural production.

To briefly illustrate what is meant by "control of the instruments of cultural production," it should be mentioned that as recently as 2004—the most recent year for which figures are available on this

subject—94% of all books sold in Australia that were published by Australian publishers, came from publishing houses based in the eastern states of New South Wales and Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics 6). Furthermore, "40% of Literature Board grants go to writers resident in New South Wales," fully ten percent more than New South Wales (home to the city of Sydney) represents as a proportion of the Australian population (Taylor 12-13). To argue that such factors do *not* have an influence on the development of a literary culture in, for example, Western Australia,

> is to display ignorance of the conditions of production of Western culture through history, of the financial factors involved in the production of both popular and "non-popular" literature today, and of the production and market factors operating within the Australian publishing industry. (Taylor 4)

Also, such an argument would represent a retreat to the Romantic idea of the writer as a "lonely individual struggling for self-expression," which has long ago been discredited as a blinkered view of the processes involved in the production of literary work (Bennett, *Cross* ix).

Of course, this begs the question, "Why is creating an increased sense of regional identity important?" It is important for many reasons, though these are perhaps best addressed in two categories. The first category encompasses all the benefits enjoyed by the residents of that region, or intra-regional benefits. These include an increased sense of regional and local pride, which often manifests itself in a greater degree of regional and local involvement; for example, an increase in volunteerism and active debate in community forums. It is admittedly difficult to identify a direct link between regional literature, an increased sense of regional identity, and these sorts of positive outcomes, but certainly there are demonstrable links between feelings of local and regional pride, and an involvement in local and regional activities and organisations promoting the improvement of the local community.

A report by The McKnight Foundation, a private philanthropic organisation, exploring the impact of the arts on eight small towns in the arguably "regional" American state of Minnesota, reaches much the same conclusion:

> One of the resounding themes of this report is the close connection between the arts—in a variety of forms—and community vitality. An increase in arts activity can draw new residents and businesses, boost civic participation, develop new social gathering places, and build bridges across ethnic and class divides—all of which strengthens communities. (Cuesta 15)

The authors of this report further note "how big a factor the arts can be in a community's ability to survive challenging social and economic changes—and how they even play a critical role in revitalizing communities already suffering from these changes" (Cuesta 18). It is no accident that this activity is taking place in a regional area, since it is communities in these areas, far removed from cultural centres and the abundance of artistic opportunities they foster, that most desperately need to "boost civic participation," and so forth. In other words, they need to create an increased sense of regional identity. The development of a regional literature could help them obtain the sorts of substantial, identifiable benefits that can be enjoyed by all the residents of the region in question.

The second category of reasons for the importance of creating an increased sense of regional identity encompasses what can be termed inter-regional benefits. In other words, these benefits are enjoyed, not just by the people inhabiting the community in question, but also by people outside of that community. A good example of this is someone from outside of Western Australia who reads a book by a Western Australian author. If the reader is sufficiently impressed with the book, the writer, or the landscape described, it may affect her perception of the region. This is not as altogether far-fetched a notion as some might think; the promotion of Western Australian literature by Fremantle Arts Centre Press has been instrumental in changing eastern Australia's

perceptions of this state from a sort of provincial backwater, to a literary and cultural hub.

Perhaps the most famous example of regional literature contributing inter-regional benefits is also perhaps the most famous example of regional literature: the works of Thomas Hardy, the bulk of which are set in the semi-imaginary county of Wessex in the English countryside. Hardy's novels contributed enormously to the tourism industry in those real counties and towns on which his imaginary locations were based. In fact, the county of Dorset still relies on the phrase "Hardy's Wessex" or "Hardy Country" in much of its current tourism literature.

The wide-ranging implications of the phenomenon of "Hardy's Wessex" are perhaps best understood through Michael Millgate's observation that

> public avidity for the reassurances of the actual was soon sufficient to turn Wessex into what might perhaps be called an apparent reality. . . . Hardy at least seems in some of his novels to have taken satisfaction in his enhancement of the local tourist industry. But there is also a sense—an altogether more serious sense—in which regionalism is forever trying to free itself from the trivialisation of "local colour" and from the widespread view that regionalism itself is a limiting term. (77-78)

Hardy's novels brought (and continue to bring) tourism to the region, which is a boon for the local economy. Nonetheless, this example belongs in the category of "inter-regional benefits," since the benefits it confers extend to those outside of the region by hopefully changing their perceptions of the regional area as parochial or provincial, and also by altering the "widespread view that regionalism itself is a limiting term".

Tim Winton is perhaps the most notable example of a Western Australian writer who confers inter-regional benefits. A defiantly regionalist writer, Winton regularly writes bestsellers that also win literary prizes and was recently voted the most popular living

Australian writer. In an essay on Winton, Beth Watzke writes: "One shared feature of the work of some West Australian writers is an awareness of the tensions between landscape and consciousness of that landscape" (20). While landscape is generally acknowledged as a literary theme of interest to greater Australia, Winton is central among Western Australian writers who have fostered the perception in Watzke and other critics (from all around Australia) that landscape is something that is of particular interest in Western Australia and to Western Australians.

On a more practical level, the adaptation of Winton's 2001 novel *Dirt Music* into a film directed by Phillip Noyce (*Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *The Saint*) and starring Colin Farrell and Rachel Weisz, is expected to inject millions of dollars into Western Australian pockets when filming begins in late 2007 in various Western Australian locations. It will also have the effect of introducing audiences around the world to the unique visual landscape of Western Australia, including the Kimberley region in far northwest Western Australia, which has seldom been documented in feature film. This event is predicted to attract new interest in travel to Western Australia and, in particular, the remote Kimberley region.

Clearly, then, creating an increased sense of regional identity is important, not just in Western Australia but everywhere that is removed from the so-called "cultural centres."

Furthermore, a sense of regional identity is particularly important at a time when, as more than one critic suggests,

> all of the traditional foundations of personal identity are now treated as choices or options: church, locality, nation, ethnicity, profession, consumption styles, sports, and voluntary associations. Consequently virtually all external forces shaping personal identity are growing weaker. [Wilbur] Zelinsky believes that having the freedom to deliberately construct identity in a range of ways is a major source of "confusion and angst" leading to an identity crisis as indicated by the growing preoccupation with the word and concept of "identity." (Adams xxv-xxvi)

Yet, in the face of what could be described as postmodernism, or a relativisation of everything from value judgements to identity, there is evidence of a reactionary trend in the form of regionalism:

> The interest in place seems . . . to be an international tendency, carried on in the face of international satellite communications, rapid air travel, the growth of cities and the dematerialisation of place in much post-modernist and science fiction literature. Strangely, in the face of such challenges, the significance of place is reasserted with increasing urgency. In this respect, writers and critics are our greatest conservationists. (Bennett, *Place* 3)

In another publication, Bennett describes this "international tendency" as "a humanistic response to the apparently dehumanising tendency of what some would call a progressive postmodernity" ("Home" 234). The case for creating and actively maintaining a sense of regional identity has never been made more strongly: it is a "humanistic response," by virtue of the benefits (both intra- and inter-regional) it confers upon people, in an increasingly impersonal world. Furthermore, it is an appropriate response to a trend that disproportionately favours those located in the cultural centres, at the expense of those found on the margins.

One of the ways in which the version of regionalism outlined in this article attempts to restore some balance between these two parties, is by affording those located outside the cultural centres the power to determine what does and what does not qualify as regional literature. In spite of the rhetoric about regionalism being a mirror, into which both residents of the region and outsiders can look—and contrary to the usual state of affairs—it is ultimately the business of those located outside the cultural centres to define "the region." After all, "the region" is not simply a unit of physical geography, but rather "a sense of 'identification' or 'consciousness of kind' which the inhabitants of a particular regional area feel for that region and/or for their fellow inhabitants of that region" (Matthews 17-18). All the residents of the region in question necessarily participate in the conversation about

what exactly defines "the region."

It is important to note, however, that the judgements of these inhabitants of the region can be influenced in myriad different ways and by individuals both from within and outside the region. In particular, national and international media, as well as creative work from writers, artists and filmmakers, which originates outside the region in question but finds its way in—as much does in these often sparsely populated areas—can significantly impact on the assessment of regionality in any given work. In this way, the concept of regionalism reincorporates the metaphor of the mirror.

IV. Looking Ahead

It is my opinion that if regional literature were accorded its due attention in academic and literary critical circles, it would assume a place alongside other literary categories such as Aboriginal literature, women's literature, queer literature, migrant literature, and so on. After all, the "sense of 'identification' or 'consciousness of kind'" that is the common ground for people across these diverse categories, is equally relevant to regional literature. It could also be subjected to the same sorts of analysis.

Similar to other so-called "minority literatures," regionalism and regional literature are not concerned with assigning every person a definitive affiliation. In other words, not everyone can be considered "regional," just as not everyone can be considered a "migrant" or "queer." Nor is it always perfectly clear with which region a particular person is affiliated, as they may have multiple affiliations (or none), again like the migrant. A work of regional literature could potentially also be considered a work of migrant literature, for example, or of Aboriginal literature; it is possible to have multiple "minority" identities.

Regionalism does not attempt to lump the entire world population into a set of reductive categories, as nationalism does via the construct of the nation (almost every living person is a citizen of one nation or another, after all) and internationalism does by simply sweeping

everyone up into one giant, amorphous bundle. Rather, regionalism is more particular in its approach; regional literature is written by those individuals located outside the cultural centres and is judged to be "regional" by members of that same community, just as other "minority literatures" are written and appraised by those individuals in their respective minority group. Consequently, residents of certain cities and states and, perhaps, even nations, will never be granted full speaking status in the conversation regarding regionalism and regional literature.

Nonetheless, these individuals will often be appealed to as an audience for regional literature, and their readings of this literature will impact on the judgements of the regional community. This is very different from the ways in which nationalism and internationalism operate, but again it is similar to the constructions of other "minority literatures." Like a mirror, these literatures are capable of reflecting images of the community in question back onto itself, as well as projecting that same image (or an ever-so-slightly altered version of that image) out into the world. "Othering" is impossible to avoid in these sorts of conversations and, anyway, I believe it is not entirely desirable to avoid it when it privileges a traditionally disempowered community.

Only when regional literature is finally recognised as a minority literature, will it become possible for it to be marketed as a distinctive literary "type." If this is done properly, it could increase the visibility and, thus, saleability of the traditionally overlooked and under-served writers of the regional areas of this country and around the world. The result would benefit not only these writers and their personal economies, but also the residents of the region in question, as well as readers-at-large who would benefit by virtue of a diversification of the literary voices they receive.

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以地域文學為鏡：反照地域，照向世界

摘 要

地域文學能具有極為重大的國家或國際文化價值。事實上，澳洲國家文學裡被賦予最高文化價值，被視為典範的許多作品，也都有理由看成是地域文學的作品。雖然如此，地域文學吸引的通常是少數的讀者，也就是背景所在或作品關注之特定地域的居民。

在本文裡，我詳述地域文學能反照地域—以及該地域居民—回到自身的方式。可是我也同時考量該地域以外的個人閱讀地域文學的方式。正如你站在浴室鏡子前面，你的某種形象映回自身，而當時有人站在你身後肩膀高度以上的地方時，他們所看到的是稍有差異的你的映像—地域文學也是如此。我首先回顧有關地域主義及澳洲地域文學的爭論，藉此分析這兩種認知之間的異同。這些爭論使支持地域主義者與支持國家主義、國際主義、及普世主義者產生對立。這些爭論也顯露出作家之間的不和，他們中有些人是澳洲的地域概念及學院的後現代理論的直率支持者。接著我往前瞻望，臆測在日益全球化的社會及出版工業裡地域文學的未來。

關鍵字：地域文學，地域主義，澳洲文學，西澳洲，西澳洲文學，少數族裔文學，書籍出版